

# FOREIGN POLICY REPORTS

## *German-Polish Disputes*

*Danzig, the Polish Corridor  
and East Prussia*

*July 5, 1933  
Vol. IX, No. 9*

25¢  
a copy

Published Fortnightly  
by the

\$5.00  
a year

**FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION**  
INCORPORATED

**EIGHTEEN EAST FORTY-FIRST STREET  
NEW YORK, N.Y.**

# GERMAN-POLISH DISPUTES

## DANZIG, the POLISH CORRIDOR and EAST PRUSSIA

by

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*with the aid of the Research Staff of the Foreign Policy Association*

*Dr. Stone has recently returned from Germany, where he studied for more than three years at the University of Berlin, and made a special survey of German-Polish relations in Danzig, the Polish Corridor and East Prussia.*

### THE DANZIG PROBLEM

WITH the accession of Herr Hitler to the German Chancellorship on January 30, 1933, the tension which characterized German-Polish relations materially increased. For many years the National Socialist leader had inflamed the German masses with violent denunciations of Germany's "shame" in the east, and had inculcated the belief that the country's honor and prosperity could be restored only by redrawing the boundary between Poland and the Reich. Five weeks later, on the eve of the German general election of March 5, 1933, bonfires on the German side of that border symbolized "the burning frontier" for millions of Germans who heard Dr. Goebbels, the Nazi Propaganda Minister, describe the bonfires over a nation-wide network.<sup>1</sup> Prompted either by the fear of dangerous developments in Danzig, one of the most important centres of German-Polish antagonism, or by the desire to reply to the Hitler bonfire demonstration, the Polish government on March 6 ordered the steamer *Wilja* to land 100 additional guards at the Westerplatte—the Polish munitions base in the entrance to the Danzig harbor.<sup>2</sup>

Poland's action was construed by officials of the Free City of Danzig and by German public opinion as a grave violation of existing Danzig-Polish agreements. The Danzig Senate immediately appealed to the High Commissioner of the League of Nations in

the Free City with the request that the additional Polish guard on the Westerplatte be forced to withdraw. On March 14, 1933 the dispute came before the Council of the League of Nations in Geneva and was settled satisfactorily through the efforts of the representatives of the great powers as well as the parties immediately concerned. Colonel Joseph Beck, Polish Foreign Minister, admitted that his government had not acted in conformity with the stipulations of the Danzig-Polish treaties in landing the detachment, and promised its prompt withdrawal.<sup>3</sup> At the same time, Dr. Ernst Ziehm, then president of the Danzig Senate, assured the Council that adequate measures would be taken by Danzig to guarantee Polish security on the Westerplatte. In view of the strength of the Hitlerite forces in Danzig, this promise may have definite future importance.

Other German-Polish controversies, however, continue to engage the attention of European statesmen. In Geneva the League Council considered anti-Jewish activities of the Nazis in German Upper Silesia, which had occurred in violation of the German-Polish Upper Silesian Convention of May 15, 1922.<sup>4</sup> On May 28, 1933 the Nazi party won a decisive victory in the election of a new *Volkstag* in Danzig. Together with its ally in the election campaign—the Young Germans—the National Socialist party received 109,296 votes, or 50.8 per cent of the

1. *New York Herald Tribune*, March 5, 1933.

2. *New York Times*, March 7, 1933.

3. *Ibid.*, March 15, 1933.

4. *Ibid.*, May 21, 27, 31, June 7, 1933.

#### FOREIGN POLICY REPORTS, VOL. IX, No. 9, JULY 5, 1933

Published by-weekly by the FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION, Incorporated, 18 East 41st Street, New York, N. Y., U. S. A. JAMES G. McDONALD, *Chairman*; RAYMOND LESLIE BUELL, *Research Director and Editor*; WILLIAM T. STONE, *Washington Representative*; HELEN TERRY, *Assistant Editor*; ELIZABETH BATTERHAM, *Secretary of the Research Department*. *Research Associates*: T. A. BISSEON, VERA MICHELES DEAN, MABEL S. INGALLS, HELEN H. MOORHEAD, ONA K. D. RINGWOOD, MAXWELL S. STEWART, CHARLES A. THOMSON, M. S. WERTHEIMER, JOHN C. DEWILDE. Subscription Rates: \$5.00 a year; to F. P. A. members \$3.00; single copies 25 cents. Entered as second-class matter on March 31, 1931 at the post office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879.

total vote of 215,135.<sup>5</sup> With 38 seats out of 72, the National Socialists control the new *Volkstag* (Popular Assembly), and the government elected by that body.<sup>6</sup> The situation created by the election of May 28 raised the question of the efficacy of the treaty agreements which separate Danzig from the Reich. The Danzig Nazis recognize Adolf Hitler, the German Chancellor, as their supreme authority, and the journey of their leader, Dr. Hermann Rauschning, to Berlin immediately following the election indicates that the Free City's policies will probably be formulated in the Wilhelmstrasse. From the point of view of Poland, which has charge of the Free City's foreign relations and is bound to it by a customs union, such a development cannot but be regarded as serious. Dr. Rauschning's statement to the German press in Berlin on May 29, however, was reassuring, and was designed to allay any nervousness which the election might have engendered. He pledged himself to observe all international treaties, to avoid the "coordination" methods of the Nazis in Germany, to protect the rights of Jews, and to seek agreement with Poland on all disputes between that country and the Free City.<sup>7</sup> For the moment tension seems to have decreased, but there is no doubt that, as long as National Socialist governments rule in Berlin and Danzig, neither Poland nor the League Council can relax their vigilance.

The Danzig problem is only one element in the complex of questions which have disturbed German-Polish relations since the Treaty of Versailles went into effect. Ever since 1919, all parties in Germany have insisted that there could be no stability in Europe without a rectification of the German-Polish boundary. On the other side of the frontier, the Poles have been equally firm in denying any possibility of a change. These post-war disputes have been merely a prolongation of the century-long struggle between Poles and Germans for the land between the Oder and the Vistula, especially the district known today as the Polish Corridor. This district, together with Danzig, lies at the crossroads between the two countries. Germany must possess it if it is to enjoy territorial unity, and the Poles must retain it if Poland is to have access to the sea. The League of Nations, recognizing the fundamental nature of this conflict, has attempted for many years to reconcile these conflicting claims. From the day that Danzig came under the protection of the League of Nations until the middle of May 1933, the

Danzig-Polish problem has come up for consideration before the League Council no less than 106 times.<sup>8</sup> There are at present 35 questions before the League High Commissioner in Danzig awaiting settlement.

During the Paris peace negotiations in 1919, the inhabitants of Danzig repeatedly demonstrated that they would consider the separation of their city from Germany an injustice, and its incorporation into the resurrected Polish state a violation of human rights. A few business interests in the city, it is true, foresaw great commercial possibilities for Danzig in the event of its union with Poland. Even in these circles, however, commercial advantage had less attraction than the desire for solidarity with the *Vaterland*.

Situated at the mouth of the Vistula on the Baltic, Danzig has been the centre of commercial activities for many centuries. Originally an unimportant "slavic-Danish" colony,<sup>10</sup> it was founded definitely as a German settlement at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Since that time Danzig has been almost exclusively inhabited by Germans. Its history has been colorful and varied. Before its establishment as a Free City in 1919, it had been associated through the centuries with Poland and with Prussia, and for a short time had been a Free City.<sup>11</sup> Today it occupies a territory of approximately 700 square miles—about half the size of Rhode Island—which was completely detached from the sovereignty of Germany by the Versailles Treaty. The legal position of the Free City is defined in that treaty. Although Danzig, together with sovereign nations, signed the Kellogg-Briand pact, it is not a completely sovereign state. The people of Danzig do not live under Polish suzerainty; Poland, nevertheless, administers the Free City's foreign relations and includes Danzig in its customs area. The Free City has sometimes been described as "half-sovereign," but this term has no definite meaning. The juridical status of Danzig is not clear, and successive decisions of the League Council and the Permanent Court of International Justice have not settled the question.

8. Fifty-six separate points of dispute have occupied the attention of the League Council once; 26 points twice; 4 points three times; 11 points four times; 3 points five times; one point six times; one point eight times; one point fourteen times; one point fifteen times; one point eighteen times; and, finally, one point nineteen times. The problem of the Westerplatte has carried off the honor of coming before the League Council on nineteen different occasions.

10. Heinrich von Treitschke, *Das Ordensland Preussen* (Leipzig), p. 31.

11. Mildred S. Wertheimer, "German-Polish Relations," Foreign Policy Association, *Information Service*, August 17, 1927. During the 13th century and until 1308, Danzig was under the sovereignty of Polish Pomeranian Dukes; from 1308-1454 it belonged to the Teutonic knights; without being a part of Poland, it was associated in a personal union with the Kings of Poland from 1454-1793; from 1793-1807 Danzig was a part of Prussia; from 1807-1814 it was a Free City under French rule; in 1814 it was regained by Prussia and remained a part of Prussia and Germany until the Treaty of Versailles came into force.

5. *New York Herald Tribune*, May 29, 1933.

6. On June 20, 1933 the *Volkstag* appointed Dr. Hermann Rauschning president of the Danzig Senate, and confirmed that body in its new composition of ten Nazis and two Catholic Centrists. *New York Herald Tribune*, June 21, 1933.

7. *New York Times*, May 30, 1933.

### INTERNATIONAL STATUS OF DANZIG

The Treaty of Versailles placed the Free City of Danzig and its constitution under the protection of the League of Nations, and stipulated that a League High Commissioner would reside in Danzig to arbitrate disputes between the Free City and Poland. It also provided for the conclusion of a Polish-Danzig treaty which was signed in Paris on November 9, 1920; this treaty was amplified by the Warsaw Agreement of October 24, 1921.<sup>12</sup> Since the main purpose in detaching Danzig from the Reich was the desire to give Poland free access to the sea and adequate facilities for developing its economic life, these treaties regulate Poland's rights in the Free City and the extent of its authority over the railways, waterways, docks and lines of communication in the port of Danzig. A Danzig Port and Waterways Board was established to operate the port. Danzig and Poland are equally represented on this board, which is under the presidency of a Swiss national. Provisions for the customs administration, monetary unit, and protection of the Polish minority in the Free City form an essential part of these agreements. In all cases of dispute, the League High Commissioner was named as the court of appeal and the League Council as a final resort.

The constitution of the Free City of Danzig, which was drawn up under the supervision of the League High Commissioner, was promulgated on June 14, 1922.<sup>13</sup> By Article 116 of this document, the constitution of the German Reich of August 11, 1919 was rescinded so far as its application to the territory of the Free City was concerned, and Danzigers were forced to renounce their German citizenship. The constitution of the Free City cannot be changed without the consent of the League Council. It originally provided for a *Volkstag* (Popular Assembly) of 120 members elected for four years by popular vote, and a Senate of 22 members elected by the *Volkstag*. These provisions were changed by a law of September 20, 1930, so that at present the Popular Assembly consists of 72 members, and the Senate of 10 members, a president and a vice president.<sup>14</sup> The Senate is elected by the *Volkstag* for an indefinite period, but may be overthrown by the lower house at any time. Article 5 of the constitution also stipulates that the Free City cannot "without the previous consent of the League of Nations in each case: (1) serve as a military or naval base; (2) erect fortifications; (3) authorize the manufacture of munitions or war material on its territory."

12. Werthelmer, "German-Polish Relations," cited.

13. Danziger Rechtsbibliothek, *Danziger Staats- und Völkerrecht* (Danzig, Georg Stilke, 1927), p. 1-35.

14. *Ibid.*, 1 Nachtrag, p. 9-18.

In general, two aims guided the efforts of both the Peace Conference in 1919 and the League Council with respect to the Danzig-Polish problem: they undertook to harmonize the economic and political well-being of Poland with the right of Danzig to retain its own German character. In providing for the League Council as a court of appeal, a neutral League High Commissioner permanently residing in Danzig, and a neutral chairman of the Harbor Board, they believed that all Polish-Danzig disputes would find a just and equitable settlement. German and Danzig dislike for the new order on the Baltic was not underestimated, but it was believed that the economic advantage accruing to Danzig from commercial relations with Poland would lessen political tension.

These hopes have been realized only to a limited extent. Periodic attempts at sincere cooperation between Poland and Danzig occurred in the decade between 1920 and 1930, but on the whole these years were characterized by innumerable quarrels, often over petty matters. Disputes arose continually over the right of Poland to anchor war vessels in the Danzig harbor; to establish a munitions base on the Westerplatte and to station a military guard there to watch war materials; to install a Polish postal service in the port of Danzig and regulate the railways in the Free City.<sup>15</sup> Specific questions were settled only to recur in a different form. All these disputes, however, were of a minor character compared with the problem created by the erection of the Polish port of Gdynia, for Gdynia seriously threatens the position which Danzig has occupied through the centuries as a great port on the Baltic.

### THE THREAT OF GDYNIA

Before the outbreak of the World War, Danzig was an important harbor in north-eastern Europe. A gradual transformation, however, took place in the business life of the city. The importance of the shipping trade diminished, and industrial activities increased. Despite Danzig's aversion to separation from Germany, a distinct trend towards optimism marked the first years of the new order. Not long after the Armistice, many German and Polish banks established branches in Danzig. At the same time, ships from all over the world began to call at Danzig, and once again the city seemed to revert to its original business of a trading and shipping center. While tonnage through Hamburg and Bremen had decreased from 28,738,518 tons in 1913 to 19,026,897 in 1921, and 9,034,924 tons (1913) to 5,603,132 (1921) respectively, tonnage through Danzig

15. Werthelmer, "German-Polish Relations," cited.



had increased in the same period from 1,861,691 to 3,171,343 tons.<sup>18</sup>

During these years, however, there was no lack of animosity between the Free City and Poland. Polish merchants frequently complained of discriminations. Danzigers insisted that Poland was attempting to limit the rights of the Free City. Meanwhile, the foundations of the Polish port of Gdynia were being laid. Ever since a stevedores' strike in Danzig delayed the transportation of munitions for the Polish army during the critical days of the Russo-Polish War in 1920, Poland had been convinced of the necessity of possessing its own harbor. Poland also claimed that the rapid development of the country and its increasing population made a second harbor essential. There can be no doubt that the constant friction between Danzig and Poland strengthened Poland's decision to acquire a port over which it could exercise unrestricted sovereignty. This port could then be used to exert pressure on Danzig in order to obtain compromises from the Free City.

An extensive plan for the erection of Gdynia was drawn up in 1921. Financial difficulties, however, delayed work until 1924. Finally, on July 4, 1924, the Polish government signed a contract with a Franco-Polish banking group for the construction of the harbor. The main participants were the Société de Construction des Batignolles (Paris), Schneider & Company, Le Creuzot, Soc. An. Hersent (Paris), and the Polski Bank (Przemyslowy). A Danish construction company—Højgaard & Schultze A. G., which actually carried out the engineering projects—was added to the group somewhat later. The capital was supplied partly by French interests and partly by the Polish Treasury. The harbor of Gdynia was started approximately eight miles north of Danzig on the Baltic, at the head of the so-called Corridor, where only a few fishermen lived in their huts. Today its population is over 45,000, and its mechanical devices among the most modern in the world.



German-Polish Frontiers

At first Danzig showed a tendency to belittle the new harbor. Danzig merchants thought it would serve as a base for munitions and for the small Polish fleet. The belief was current in the Free City that the success of a harbor depended on the experience, business relations, traditions, and business acumen of the merchants, and not on new buildings in the hands of inexperienced men. There was, naturally, much criticism of the project, but little fear.

From 1927 to 1929 there was a general increase in international trade, and this was reflected in the tonnage passing through Danzig. Nevertheless, the merchants of the Free City began to notice the competition of Gdynia. They also complained that most of the goods being shipped through the Danzig harbor were bulky and cheap, and therefore unprofitable. This was partly admitted by the Polish diplomatic representative in Danzig, Dr. Henry Strasburger: "The economic position of Danzig is not as advantageous as one might think from a consideration of the statistics for imports and exports . . . Most of the business is done without the Danzig middlemen."<sup>19</sup> To the discomfiture of Danzig

18. *Danziger Statistische Mitteilungen*, June 10, 1928, p. 81.

19. *Baltischer Almanach für 1928* (Danzig, Baltische Presse, 1928), p. 57.

merchants, the latter statement was becoming increasingly true. Polish industrialists, manufacturers, exporters and importers were signing contracts directly with foreign firms and interests, and Danzig was sinking to the level of a transit harbor. For a brief period in 1929 there was a trend toward understanding between the Free City and Poland. Premier Bartel of Poland visited Danzig on February 27, 1929 and received a warm welcome. He assured Danzig that Poland was deeply interested in economic cooperation, and had every desire to protect "the cultural interests and the peculiar national character of the Free City."<sup>20</sup> The world crisis, however, destroyed whatever progress might have been made in Polish-Danzig relations, and the Danzig elections of November 16, 1930, which strengthened the nationalist parties, prevented any real understanding with the Poles.

Although statistics do not offer a complete explanation of the Danzig-Polish problem, they indicate important trends. The following tables show the total tonnage passing through Danzig and Gdynia:<sup>21</sup>

#### Trade Through Danzig and Gdynia<sup>22</sup>

Year	Danzig In Tons		
	Imports	Exports	Total
1912 .....	1,141,455	1,311,757	2,453,212
1913 .....	1,233,630	878,471	2,112,101
1920 .....	1,700,000	138,246	1,838,246
1921 .....	1,026,420	378,952	1,405,372
1922 .....	466,287	504,411	970,698
1923 .....	654,929	1,062,864	1,717,793
1924 .....	738,071	1,636,485	2,374,556
1925 .....	690,779	2,031,969	2,722,748
1926 .....	640,695	5,659,604	6,300,299
1927 .....	1,517,194	6,380,419	7,897,613
1928 .....	1,832,409	6,783,273	8,615,682
1929 .....	1,792,951	6,766,699	8,559,650
1930 .....	1,090,631	7,122,462	8,213,093
1931 .....	754,300	7,576,205	8,330,505
1932 .....	428,000	5,048,000	5,476,000

Year	Gdynia		
	Imports	Exports	Total
1924 .....	631	9,086	9,717
1925 .....	1,568	51,142	52,710
1926 .....	179	413,826	414,005
1927 .....	6,702	889,439	896,141
1928 .....	190,133	1,767,215	1,957,348
1929 .....	324,298	2,497,893	2,822,191
1930 .....	504,117	3,121,631	3,625,748
1931 .....	558,549	4,741,564	5,300,113
1932 .....	474,000	4,751,000	5,225,000

20. Robert Machray, *Poland 1914-1931* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1932), p. 369.

21. *Danziger Statistische Mitteilungen*, all issues from 1920 to 1933. Statistics for 1932 from the National Economic Bank of Warsaw, January 1933.

22. The great discrepancy between the imports and exports (in tonnage) through both harbors during the last decade is explained by the fact that coal is the main commodity which Poland exports. Less bulky goods of higher value are imported. Poland has also cut down its imports to a minimum and forced its exports in order to protect its currency.

These figures show the enormous increase in traffic through Danzig, as well as the astounding growth of Gdynia. In comparison with its pre-war tonnage, Danzig's trade had increased 350 per cent by 1931. The 1932 statistics also prove the effectiveness of Poland's new weapon against Danzig. While tonnage through Gdynia decreased approximately 75,000 tons in comparison with the previous year, there was a decrease of about 2,854,505 tons in goods passing through Danzig during the same period.

There are many indications that Poland favors Gdynia in preference to Danzig for the transportation of high-priced goods. One reason for this, according to the Poles, is the lack of cooperation from Danzig merchants. Following the construction of great modern warehouses, rice mills, refrigeration plants, etc., in Gdynia, rice, tobacco, sugar, butter, eggs and bacon were routed via that port by Polish importers and exporters.<sup>23</sup> Danzig has taken the question of Polish favoritism for Gdynia to the League Council. Its representatives at Geneva have emphasized that Danzig was separated from Germany to give Poland free access to the sea and that now Poland is sending its trade through a different port. On May 10, 1932, the League Council decided that Poland was pledged to make full use of the Danzig harbor.<sup>24</sup> The Council recommended that the High Commissioner and the two governments arrange for the realization of this pledge. So far it has proved impossible to agree on the meaning of "full use."

Until 1931 Danzig's share of Poland's foreign commerce increased steadily in tonnage—38.2 per cent went through Danzig and 24.5 through Gdynia. Danzig's share of Poland's foreign commerce, however, was only 21.9 per cent so far as value was concerned.<sup>25</sup> These figures tend to show that bulky goods, such as coal and iron ore, are sent through the Free City, while higher-priced goods are shipped through Gdynia.

Danzig's attitude toward Gdynia has changed from complete indifference to fear. Danzig is in a position to handle approximately 12,000,000 tons a year without further improvements. In 1929 Polish trade through both harbors amounted to 11,383,000 tons.<sup>26</sup> According to this standard, Dan-

23. The importation of tobacco decreased in Danzig from 6,608 tons in 1930 to 1,653 in 1931. During the same period, it increased from 981 tons to 4,499 in Gdynia. Only 30 tons of raw rice were imported through Danzig in 1931, while 75,286 tons came through Gdynia. A similar trend was to be noticed in the exports through the two ports. Bacon exports through Danzig decreased from 12,184 tons in 1930 to 2,989 in 1931, while in Gdynia they increased from 40,624 tons in 1930 to 51,821 in 1931. Eighty-eight tons of butter were exported through Danzig in 1931, and 1,723 tons through Gdynia.

24. *Vossische Zeitung*, May 10, 1932; cf. also League of Nations, *Official Journal*, July 1932, p. 1177 et seq.

25. *Revue politique et parlementaire*, April 10, 1932, p. 73.

26. *Collection of Documents regarding the Application in the matter of Danzig Gdynia* (Danzig, Danzig Senate, 1930), p. 100.

zig could handle the entire trade in its own port. Gdynia, which is being constantly enlarged, also has facilities for at least 12,000,000 tons. In Danzig opinion, the development of Polish foreign trade in the future will not be of sufficient magnitude to utilize the full capacities of both ports. Furthermore, were a favorable settlement of general German-Polish trade differences arranged, trade between the two countries would increase over land routes and be diverted from the harbors.

Various measures adopted by the Polish government, such as sudden tariff changes, have created difficulties for the merchants of Danzig. In many cases these measures also have interfered with trade in Gdynia and were the Polish counterpart of regulations issued by almost all countries during the economic crisis. The establishment of Polish importing and exporting syndicates, which favor Gdynia, has hurt Danzig. As a result of these different measures, Danzig's monopoly of Polish foreign commerce has been definitely broken. Today Gdynia is the hope of the entire Polish nation.

#### FRICION OVER CUSTOMS

Intimately associated with the Danzig-Gdynia problem are the disputes which have arisen as a result of the inclusion of Danzig in the customs area of the Polish Republic.<sup>27</sup> Although there were many hardships connected with the transference of Danzig from one customs unit to another, many business men in the Free City at first looked on the new Polish state as a fertile economic field for Danzig enterprises. In order to mitigate the difficulties involved in the reorientation of Danzig commercial policy, a convention supplementary to the Warsaw Agreement of October 24, 1921 was concluded by Poland and Danzig on December 21, 1921.<sup>28</sup> The provisions of this convention allowed Danzig to import, free of duty from Germany, a limited quantity of goods for its home market, as well as unfinished goods for final manufacture in the Free City. These goods came under the category of "quotas." The arrangements also provided that Danzig officials were to administer the customs laws on the territory of the Free City, although Polish inspectors were allowed certain rights in examining the application of the laws. In addition, provision was made for proportional division of the customs revenues between Danzig and the Polish Republic.

The operation of these regulations has raised many difficulties. Poland has charged Danzig with lax administration of the laws

in connection with the importation of German goods into the Free City. According to Poland, Danzig has taken advantage of the "quotas" to flood the Polish market with cheap German goods which have not been taxed. The Poles have also accused Danzig of sending raw materials to Germany, and then importing the manufactured goods without levying duties on them. In January 1932 the Polish Minister of Finance decreed that all goods coming to Poland by way of Danzig would have to undergo inspection in order that the Poles might stop what amounted to free German imports into Poland.<sup>29</sup> At the same time, Poland claimed that Danzig had not adapted itself to the Polish market in the period which had elapsed since 1920. Danzig disputed these Polish criticisms, and pointed out that the inspection of Danzig goods on the Polish border violated the Warsaw Agreement and paralyzed the economic life of the Free City, which had lost its German market when it was cut off from the Reich in 1919, and was now prohibited from sending its products to Poland. Danzig and Polish boycotts contributed to the general customs difficulties. On August 13, 1932 Danzig and Poland finally signed two similar protocols which pledged each to take "vigorous action in its territory against any economic propaganda directed against Danzig (or Polish) establishments or products coming from Danzig (or Poland), and to use its authority to prevent hostile acts and demonstrations against persons of Danzig (or Polish) nationality."<sup>30</sup> The main points at issue, however, were not cleared up by these protocols.

Both governments appealed to the League Council against the November 20, 1932 decision of M. Rosting, the High Commissioner of the League, which attempted to settle these customs disputes.<sup>31</sup> Up to the present, these difficulties have not been adjusted and are being considered by experts appointed by the League Council. Danzig continues to insist that Poland has been using the customs laws in an attempt to incorporate the Free City into a purely Polish tariff unit which would eventually lead to the loss of the cultural and political independence granted to Danzig by the Treaty of Versailles,<sup>32</sup> and Poland insists that Danzig wishes to flood Poland with German goods.

#### THE WESTERPLATTE CONFLICT

A third dispute between Danzig and Poland concerns the Westerplatte.<sup>33</sup> In 1924 the League Council authorized Poland to

29. *The Times* (London), April 12, 1932.

30. League of Nations, *Official Journal*, January 1933, p. 145.

31. *Ibid.*, February 1933, p. 225-235.

32. *New York Times*, November 22, 1932.

33. Cf. footnote 8, p. 95.

27. Wertheimer, "German-Polish Relations," cited.

28. Danziger Rechtsbibliothek, *Danziger Staats-und Völkerrecht*, cited, p. 442-547.



utilize this peninsula in the harbor of the Free City for a munitions base. Poland has not established a permanent base on the Westerplatte, and takes advantage of this right only infrequently and temporarily for the transfer of munitions from ships to railway trains which carry the explosive materials to their destination in Poland. Danzig opposed the establishment of a Polish guard, and demanded that the police of the Free City be given powers of supervision over the Westerplatte. The League Council, however, gave Poland permission to establish its own guard, which can only be increased with the approval of the League High Commissioner in Danzig. The Polish guard, which supervises the transfer and patrols the warehouses, is made up of 88 men and officers and, by agreement, is withdrawn at the conclusion of each loading.<sup>34</sup>

By 1928 tonnage through the Danzig harbor had increased enormously in comparison with 1913, and it was necessary to make use of all available space in the port. In the spring of 1928 relatively friendly conversations took place between Danzig and Poland, which led to an agreement on August 4, 1928 allowing Danzig to utilize the Westerplatte for commercial shipping purposes whenever Poland was not using it for the transportation of munitions.<sup>35</sup>

The peaceful adjustment of the Westerplatte incident of March 1933<sup>36</sup> is no indication that this problem has been definitely settled. The Danzigers insist that the proper location for a Polish munitions depot is Gdynia, the Polish naval harbor, and that the presence of munitions in their harbor is a danger to the physical and economic life of Danzig. Poland, in reply, points out that, in using the Westerplatte, it is only taking advantage of a treaty right. It discounts Danzig's fears about a possible explosion by indicating that the city was used as a munitions base by Germany before the war, and that most large harbors contain munitions within their bounds.

In the agreement of August 4, 1928 Danzig also assented to the use of the harbor as a port of anchorage for the Polish navy. Since necessary repairs and revictualling of the ships were done in the port of the Free City, this agreement was profitable to economic interests in Danzig. At the same time, it provided the Polish navy with a base during the winter, and a port where highly technical repairs could be made. The construction of Gdynia was not then sufficiently advanced to offer the Polish navy similar

facilities. In the spring of 1931, during a period of renewed Polish-Danzig tension, the government of the Free City announced that, with the completion of Gdynia, it was no longer necessary for the Polish fleet to utilize Danzig, and declared that the practice must cease. The 1928 agreement contained a provision for terminating this arrangement. Poland, nevertheless, disputed Danzig's attitude, and the question was referred to the Permanent Court of International Justice by the League Council on September 19, 1931. On December 11, 1931 the Court decided in favor of Danzig, declaring that the Treaty of Versailles, the subsequent Danzig-Polish agreements and the decisions of the League Council and the High Commissioner in Danzig "do not confer upon Poland rights or attributions as regards the access to, or the anchorage in, the port and waterways of Danzig of Polish war vessels."<sup>37</sup> The Danzig Senate then issued a decree forbidding the Polish navy to utilize the Free City as a port of anchorage. Warsaw was by no means satisfied with this decision. At the beginning of May 1932 two London papers, the *Daily Herald* and the *Daily Express*, printed sensational statements that the Polish fleet planned to attack Danzig.<sup>38</sup> These reports were unfounded, and the Polish Ambassador in London called at the Foreign Office to protest against these rumors which endangered European peace.<sup>39</sup>

Almost six weeks later, however, on June 15, 1932, the Polish torpedo boat *Wicher* steamed into Danzig harbor without previous announcement through the customary diplomatic authorities. At that time a part of the British fleet was visiting Danzig, and Poland explained the visit of the *Wicher* as a gesture of courtesy to the visiting British ships.<sup>40</sup> Since Danzig possessed no fleet and Poland was responsible for Danzig's foreign relations, Poland felt it to be its duty to greet the visitors. On the ground that the Polish ship had not observed international etiquette, the Danzig Senate protested immediately to M. Papée, Poland's diplomatic representative in Danzig, but he refused to take cognizance of this move. Less than six hours after its arrival, the Polish vessel departed from the harbor. These six hours were sufficient, however, to make the press of Danzig, Germany and Poland bluster for two days. The diplomacy of Count Gravina, League High Commissioner, prohibited serious developments. A week later the visit of

37. Permanent Court of International Justice, Series A. B., Fasc. 43, *Advisory Opinion*, December 11, 1931. *Access to, or Anchorage in, the Port of Danzig of Polish War Vessels* (Leyden, Sijthoff).

38. *Vossische Zeitung*, May 2, 1932.

39. *The Times* (London), May 3, 1932.

40. *Ibid.*, June 16, 1932.

34. League of Nations, *Official Journal*, February 1926, p. 138.

35. *Ibid.*, October 1928, p. 1483.

36. Cf. p. 94.



the German fleet in Danzig led to another "incident."<sup>41</sup>

The rapid succession of these incidents connected with the question of a port of anchorage convinced both Poland and Danzig that a new agreement was necessary. Under the energetic auspices of Count Gravina, a protocol concerning this problem was signed on August 13, 1932 by Dr. Ziehm, president of the Senate of the Free City, and M. Papée, which apparently superseded the August 1928 agreement.<sup>42</sup> International rules for visiting fleets were recognized as applicable in the harbor of the Free City, but the procedure for the Polish fleet was simplified and salutes were abolished for the occasions when Polish warships came into the harbor for repairs. No modification of this protocol was to be made for three years.

The two questions of the Westerplatte and the port of anchorage reveal the ambiguity of Danzig's position. Both Danzig and Poland attempt to utilize every right granted to them, and international machinery has attempted to bring about compromises which occasionally have increased the tension. These issues are part of a larger problem. On June 22, 1921 the League Council decided that, in times of danger for the Free City, the High Commissioner could call on the Polish government to defend the city, and also request it to re-establish order whenever internal troubles could not be suppressed by the police forces of the Free City.<sup>43</sup> Should this decision be invoked, the Westerplatte would be an advantageous landing place for Polish forces.

#### HITLERISM AND THE FUTURE OF DANZIG

In the present state of fervid German nationalism in Danzig, the presence of Polish troops, even if at the command of the League of Nations, would probably lead to extremely serious complications. Ever since 1919, Germany and the inhabitants of Danzig have regarded the Free City as an outpost of Germanism that must be defended at all costs. In his farewell to Danzig, after many years of energetic work as president of the Danzig Senate, Dr. Sahm stated what all Danzigers feel: "The German character of Danzig must be preserved and consequently Danzig must be preserved for the whole German people. All my efforts were directed to that goal. In everything that I did, I always asked myself first, am I helping or am I damaging the German character of Danzig."<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, a famous Polish historian wrote in 1919 that: "Only a single right and

successful solution of the problem is possible: . . . Danzig must revert to Poland, Poland to Danzig. In that event . . . the ancient city of Danzig, born anew in the present, will become the great, powerful, and prosperous seaport of the resurrected Poland."<sup>45</sup>

Today Danzig is not great, majestic nor happy. Customs revenues have sunk, unemployment is widespread, and the farmers of the territory of the Free City are unable to compete in the home market with the Polish farmers, since the latter are able to produce much more cheaply as a result of their lower standard of living.<sup>46</sup> It is of course true that in all countries similar conditions exist at present, but the inhabitants of Danzig are naturally inclined to see the main cause of their difficulties in the settlement of 1919. The Poles still hope that the Danzigers of the future will not feel so closely bound to the Reich and that a dispassionate attitude toward economic realities will make the inhabitants of the Free City eager to cooperate in the progressive development of the new Poland. In view of the sentiments of the post-war German generation to which the younger Danzigers belong, this hope does not seem to have much real basis. To German youth, the stipulations of the Treaty of Versailles with regard to Danzig and the Corridor are intolerable.

The Free City is now a Nazi stronghold. The police and customs forces of Danzig are strongly sympathetic to National Socialist ideals.<sup>47</sup> The elections of November 16, 1930 and May 28, 1933 gave definite proof of Danzig's antipathy to Poland. Yet Dr. Rauschning's statement of May 29, 1933 indicated that even the Nazi government will live up to the letter, if not the spirit, of the Polish-Danzig agreements. For Danzig is fundamentally too weak to embark on a perilous policy of opposition to Poland, while Chancellor Hitler is preoccupied with the difficulties of ruling Germany and apparently does not wish to create complications with Poland and the League of Nations at the present time. Finally, impartial persons in both Danzig and Germany realize that reunion with Germany, unaccompanied by economic safeguards from Poland, would lead inevitably to the complete economic ruin of Danzig, whose only hinterland is the resurrected Polish state. The question of the Free City is more than a Danzig problem. It is a German-Polish question and, as such, inextricably connected with the Corridor dispute.

41. *Berliner Tageblatt*, June 20, 1932.

42. League of Nations, *Official Journal*, January 1933, p. 142.

43. *Ibid.*, September 1921, p. 671.

44. *Danziger Neueste Nachrichten*, April 17, 1931.

45. Simon Askenazy, *Danzig and Poland* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1921), p. 102.

46. *The Economist*, May 20, 1933, p. 1064.

47. *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, May 12, 1933.

## THE DISPUTE OVER THE POLISH CORRIDOR

Although Poland received many rights as a result of the Paris Peace Conference, it did not acquire complete sovereignty over the Free City. The statesmen at Paris, however, granted Poland access to the sea by ceding to it a narrow strip of land between Pomerania on the west and Danzig and East Prussia on the east, known as the Polish Corridor. This decision was fraught with dangerous possibilities of conflict, since it involved the separation of Germany into two parts.<sup>49</sup> According to official German statistics of 1910, the population of that part of West Prussia which was incorporated into Poland and is now known as the Corridor was 964,704. Of these, 411,621 were German-speaking, 433,281 Polish-speaking, and 104,602 Kashubes.<sup>50</sup> Since the Kashubes are Slavs, speak a Polish dialect, are devout Catholics and sent Polish representatives to the German Reichstag from 1871 to 1918, they must be considered Polish in their sympathies. They live in the northwestern part of the Corridor on the Baltic and are descendants of the original inhabitants of this section. According to the Polish census of December 1931, there were 1,086,144 people living in the Corridor, of whom 976,499 were Polish-speaking and 109,645 German-speaking.<sup>51</sup> Today the Corridor is almost thoroughly Polonized. School laws, property laws and land regulations

have been administered to bring pressure upon Germans and have contributed to the decrease in the German population. At the same time inhabitants of other parts of Poland, as well as Poles from the United States, have settled in this district. By 1930 the city of Bromberg had lost 63,276 of its German inhabitants; from 77 per cent of the population of the city, the German element had decreased to 12 per cent.<sup>52</sup> This movement was characteristic of all the cities and towns in the Corridor. One reason for the great German migration was the departure of officials and, to a lesser extent, army officers with their families.

It is usually assumed that the Corridor comprises approximately those parts of the former German provinces of West Prussia and Posen extending from Bromberg (Bydgoszcz) to the Baltic, which now belong to Poland. In the German demands for return of the Corridor, the economic value of the district plays a minor rôle. The Corridor does not possess the rich mineral deposits and industrial equipment of the Upper Silesian territory ceded to Poland. Approximately 6,000 square miles in extent, it is, aside from the port of Gdynia, a relatively poor agricultural district. But it links Germany with East Prussia, and as such is necessary to achieve German solidarity.

## THE PLIGHT OF EAST PRUSSIA

Separated from the main body of the Reich by the Polish Corridor, East Prussia has an unenviable political and economic position. According to the official German statistics of 1925, 2,256,349 people inhabited the isolated province at that time.<sup>53</sup> Its history, like that of Danzig, has been varied and colorful.<sup>54</sup> Colonized by Teutonic knights early in the 13th century, it became one of the most powerful forces in German development.

During the first years after the establishment of the Corridor, there were many difficulties which impeded transportation between the Reich and East Prussia. A detailed convention, based on stipulations of the Versailles Treaty, was signed in Paris by Germany, Poland and the Free City of Danzig on April 21, 1921, regulating communication between the two parts of Germany.<sup>55</sup> Poland granted Germany freedom of transit of goods and persons, and exemption from

customs duties on all traffic between the two parts of the country. The aim of this convention and of later supplementary agreements was to make the Corridor as invisible as possible. The political antagonism between Poland and Germany, however, created many hardships and delays which interfered with the proper administration of these regulations. German passengers in trains passing through the Corridor were forced to sit in sealed cars, since they were not permitted to open the windows. Freight trains with valuable produce were held up on the Polish border on the charge of insufficient data accompanying the shipments. Personal relations between the German and Polish train crews were not always friendly. All these difficulties, however, have for the most part been solved. Today, according to Dr. J. A. van Hamel, League High Commissioner in Danzig between 1925 and 1929, "transit trains are running regularly, transit of goods and of passengers find no obstacles.

49. Throughout its history the district had been a football between Poland and Prussia. It was in the hands of Polish dukes until 1308, when it came into the possession of Brandenburg. In 1311 the Teutonic knights became masters of the territory and retained it until 1466 when it was united with Poland. From 1772, the year of the first partition of Poland, until 1919 it was a Prussian possession. In spite of all these changes the German population played a dominant rôle in the cultural and economic life of the Corridor throughout the centuries. They comprised the most important element in the towns. German intelligence and energy developed and improved the section. Nevertheless, the majority of the inhabitants in the Corridor were Polish-speaking.

50. *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das deutsche Reich, 1923*, p. 12-13.

51. *Concise Statistical Year-Book of Poland* (Warsaw, Bureau of Statistics, 1932).

52. Hermann Rauschnig, *Die Entdeutschung Westpreussens und Posen* (Berlin, Reimar Hobbing, 1930), p. 340-346.

53. *Statistisches Jahrbuch für das deutsche Reich, 1931* (Berlin, Reimar Hobbing, 1931), p. 5.

54. Wertheimer, "German-Polish Relations," cited.

55. *Ibid.*

In the earlier years there may have been petty difficulties, but nowadays they have disappeared and complaints about locked trains are a thing of the past."<sup>56</sup> Although the transportation question has been practically solved, the Corridor problem transcends this technical difficulty. It is the problem of Germany's position in the East. East Prussia, the cradle of German freedom after the Napoleonic conquests, was cut off from the main body of the Reich and has become strategically and economically isolated.

Poland is convinced, however, that the return of the Corridor to Germany would be the signal for the fourth partition of Poland. According to the Poles, German domination of Baltic ports from Emden to Memel would lead to the commercial subjection of all Central and Eastern European countries. Consequently the Poles refuse to consider any revision.<sup>57</sup>

#### TENSION ON THE EAST PRUSSIAN FRONTIER

From the German point of view, the problem takes on an entirely different aspect. Germany has been deprived of the territorial unity for which all nations have struggled. The situation of East Prussia is difficult. Despite its sea connection with Germany, its existence would be threatened in case of war between Germany and Poland. All transit through the Corridor would cease in the moment of danger. Poland would only have to blow up the rails to prohibit traffic from the Reich to East Prussia. As a result of the disarmament stipulations of the Versailles Treaty, Polish aviators and the Polish army could advance into East Prussia, which is devoid of defensive weapons and fortifications. East Prussians consequently have lived in a state of tension since 1919. Polish success in Upper Silesia during the rebellion of 1921,<sup>58</sup> General Zeligowski's exploits in Lithuania in 1920<sup>59</sup> which resulted in Polish seizure of the Vilna district despite the interference of the League have convinced East Prussians that such Polish experiments are again possible. In the spring of 1932, many inhabitants of Königsberg and other places were thrown into a state of panic by notices written in flaming red and posted on billboards and shop windows: "Attention! This is the Radio Station of the Eastern Marches. Polish troops crossed the East Prussian border tonight."<sup>61</sup> They were quieted only after they had read newspaper articles stating that the whole matter was a

book advertisement. While these incidents have proved to be false alarms, their psychological effect is cumulative. Although the advertised book was written by a Reichswehr officer to steel the courage of the inhabitants and give them additional faith in the Reichswehr, the opposite result was attained. Money invested in East Prussia is considered unsafe, interest charges rise, people emigrate to other parts of the Reich to evade the danger which seems inevitable, and the economic situation of the province gradually deteriorates.

Like all boundary districts situated far from the principal markets, East Prussia has been faced by a difficult economic situation which the present political tension has only served to increase. Relatively poor land, bad climate and unfavorable transportation conditions place East Prussia at a disadvantage as compared with other parts of Germany. In view of the political situation in Eastern Europe, moreover, Germany cannot look on East Prussia as merely an economic problem. Germany's future depends to a great extent on developments in the East, and it is only natural that it undertakes all possible measures to protect its possessions.

The East Prussian question is also one of population. Owing to its isolation the province is subjected to growing Polish pressure and, instead of immigration into, there is emigration out of, East Prussia. The German government has encouraged the settlement of sturdy peasants from the Rhine and other sections of Germany along the East Prussian boundaries, and Reichswehr soldiers who, according to the military clauses of the Versailles Treaty must serve for twelve years, are offered land along these frontiers for their permanent homes. There have also been suggestions of erecting industries in East Prussia, especially textile factories.<sup>62</sup> The success of the latter measures appears questionable, although a régime of peace in Eastern Europe might not make it impossible. The German government is also considering division of the great landed estates in East Prussia into small holdings, in spite of the difficulties of realizing this policy. In 1925 there were 134 inhabitants to the square kilometer in all Germany, and only 61 in East Prussia. Between 1925 and 1930, 5,479 new farms were settled in East Prussia. This number, however, is not sufficient according to German experts in Eastern European questions.

One of the reasons for the depressed agricultural situation in East Prussia is the loss of the former West Prussian market now composing the Corridor and Posen.<sup>63</sup> Ex-

56. J. A. van Hamel, *Danzig and the Polish Problem*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 1933, p. 158.

57. Jan Ciechanowski, "The Polish Corridor: Revision or Peace?" *Foreign Affairs*, July 1932, p. 571.

58. League of Nations, *Minutes of the Extraordinary Session of the Council*, August 29-October 12, 1921, *passim*.

59. League of Nations, *Minutes of the Fourteenth Session of the Council*, September 12-October 12, 1921, p. 102 et seq.

61. *Frankfurter Zeitung*, May 19, 1932.

62. *Der deutsche Volkswirt*, June 10, 1932, p. 1216 et seq.

63. Among the territories detached from Germany and annexed to Poland by the Versailles Treaty, the province of Posen was the most fertile agricultural district. Prior to the outbreak



ports of agricultural products from East Prussia to the Corridor territory dropped from 220,000 tons in 1913 to 17,000 in 1926. The result of the territorial changes and the absence of a commercial treaty between Germany and Poland has been that East Prussian trade with the co-terminous districts which have become Polish dropped from what comprised 25 per cent of its total trade in 1913 to 3 per cent in 1927. In order to overcome some of these ill effects, the German railway tariffs have been lowered for East Prussian produce. The Reich also contributes over 10,000,000 RM. yearly to lessen freight charges so that products from the separated province may compete in the German markets situated over 300 kilometers distant. For the purpose of increasing traffic through East Prussia, Lithuania and the Corridor and diverting it from central Poland, the German-Russian railway agreement of 1925 established differential tariffs.<sup>64</sup>

#### GERMANY AIDS EAST PRUSSIAN AGRICULTURE

The most important method, however, by which the German government has attempted to rescue East Prussia from its plight is the "Osthilfe." Between 1927 and 1932 tremendous sums were annually appropriated to save bankrupt estates, free landowners from debts, prevent auctioning of estates hopelessly mortgaged, pay landowners extremely high prices for their land and parcel that land among peasants who could not pay for it, and lower taxes in the boundary districts. These subventions of one small part of Germany at the cost of the main part, coupled with high tariffs on agricultural products at the expense of Germany's industries and consumers, have been made possible only by the use of political arguments by landowners east of the Elbe. The sums expended by Prussia and the Reich

in the execution of the first plans were small in comparison with the more recent outlays. The decree issued on November 17, 1931 by the Brüning government constituted a climax to all the measures that had been previously taken. It established the "Sicherungsverfahren" and "Entschuldungsverfahren" which freed landowners of their debts at the cost of their creditors and the Reich. This decree, which made it legally possible for a debtor to refuse to pay his debts, was branded by many Germans as an expropriation of capital to benefit great landowners.

In spite of the universally recognized necessity in Germany to support East Prussia, these measures met with much criticism. Subventions granted to East Prussia mainly benefit the great landowners. Although their power in post-war Germany was not so great as before, it was never broken. During the last few years their influence has increased, and among the decisive factors which led to the resignation of former Chancellor Brüning in May 1932 was the hostility of the Junker class to his plan for parcelling estates hopelessly in debt. It is understandable that families which have played a great rôle in Prussian and German history, and whose contributions to the development of their country have not been insignificant, should be reluctant to lose their possessions. It does not appear, however, that all Germany will continue to make large sacrifices for the benefit of a few thousand great landowners who cannot profitably run their undertakings. Such a policy is all the more impossible because the welfare of the whole country demands peasant settlement in East Prussia if the Slavic tide on Germany's boundaries is to meet with an effective barrier. The return of the Corridor to Germany would not completely solve the problem of the great landowners, although it would slightly help to improve their position. The return of the Corridor would, however, end the isolation of East Prussia. It is no coincidence that Hitlerism has strongholds in East Prussia and Danzig.

Solution of the Danzig, East Prussian and Corridor questions is rendered all the more difficult by the existence of the Upper Silesian problem and the treatment of minorities in both countries. Finally, transcending these specific issues is the psychological attitude of Poles and Germans, which constitutes a serious obstacle to collaboration between the two races. The Germans wish to regain in part what an unjust treaty has taken away from them; the Poles are no less determined to defend the integrity of their present boundaries and preserve the existence of their national life.

of the World War it had been one of the greatest grain-producing sections of Germany. The majority of its inhabitants were Polish. According to German statistics, the region in 1910 had a population of 1,946,461, of whom 1,263,346 were Polish-speaking. (*Statistisches Jahrbuch für das deutsche Reich, 1923*, p. 12, 13.) German negotiators at Paris in May 1919 recognized the district as Polish, and expressed Germany's readiness to transfer most of the province to Poland. (*Materialien betreffend die Friedensverhandlungen*, Berlin, Das Auswärtige Amt, 1919, Part III, p. 38.) Since 1919, a large number of Germans have migrated from the province.

During the week of April 9, 1933 a German monument was unveiled in the vicinity of Schneidemühl, near the Polish border, giving the names of former German cities "waiting for liberation," including the city of Posen. (Cf. *Manchester Guardian Weekly*, April 21, 1933.) Until this time Posen had played no rôle in German revisionist aims.

64. Under this agreement the transportation of a ton of goods from Rostov on the Don in the U.S.S.R. to Nuremberg by way of Poland—2,891 kilometers—costs \$40.42, and only \$33.04 through East Prussia and Lithuania—3,190 kilometers. The distance between Hamburg and Moscow is approximately the same by the direct route through central Poland as by way of East Prussia and Lithuania—2,138 kilometers over the former route, and 2,133 over the latter. Nevertheless the cost of transportation per ton of goods is \$24.57 by way of Poland and only \$16.34 through East Prussia. Casimir Smogorzewski, *Poland, Germany and the Corridor* (Paris, Gebethner et Wolf, 1929), p. 50.